

Subject: Mar Vista Assessment District
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Each of us has talked about the Steve Lopez column from the other day. I wanted to see if there might be an easy answer for Mike. After spending a little time on it, I don't see one. Sorry.

The hope was that maybe a private contractor could install the curbs, gutters, and aprons less expensively than estimated in the Engineer's Report. Recently, my engineer has been doing a fair amount of municipal concrete repair management in the Palos Verdes area. It turns out that his bid results from smaller local contractors have been coming in close to those estimated in the Report. That says to me that this project will come in above its estimated cost when the City of LA solicits bids because that is typically how their bids turn out. Somehow, the City process seems to work against getting the best available costs, but that's another story.

The "fat" in this project may be in its street reconstruction budget. That's the part of the project that is slated to be performed by City forces. Bidding that work out to the private sector should save project costs, which could reduce homeowner assessments if that savings were passed through. The City Council should be able to make that happen by an appropriate amendment to the Report after the Public Hearing simply because the Gas Tax budget can afford it.

Similarly, it seems that the City Council could also amend the Report to provide more Gas Tax support for curb, gutter, and apron construction, which would reduce the homeowner assessments. "Reduced assessments" may not be what the homeowners quoted in the Lopez article really want, however. They seem to want "no" assessment. That's the "rub" here.

The practical "political art" in the situation seems to be to generate the needed homeowner assessment district support (votes) by reducing their costs but not to go so far as to jeopardize the validity of the District or to lose support of the other needed Council votes. Parenthetically, if these assessments can be paid over 10 years, that seems like a pretty reasonable deal to me. Lastly, it's taken a lot of time and effort to get this Assessment District project to where it is. The homeowners and CD11 are probably best served by capturing this opportunity and not letting it slip away. It may never return.

Wish we had found a "silver bullet" but that just wasn't the case.

